

ROOSEVELT'S MARGIN OF VICTORY

By FREDERICK WIEHL

On November 7, 1944, Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected President of the United States for the fourth time in succession. This event of American as well as international significance is examined by an American lawyer and labor representative at present in China who has contributed several articles on American affairs to this periodical.

OUTSIDE the Republican camp in the USA, there were few political observers who doubted that Roosevelt would win the 1944 election; the only question was how big his margin would be. In the twelve years during which he has been in power, Roosevelt has had an unprecedented chance of organizing a gigantic political machine and building up a large following of people who were in one way or another under obligation to him and on whose votes he could count. To understand this we must look at Roosevelt's first three terms.

When, after many years of Republican rule, Roosevelt moved into the White House in 1932, Washington was flooded by unemployed politicians who surged upon the capital from the remotest corners of the United States. They came with requests for appointments for themselves as well as for their friends back home. Usually these friends were the local district and precinct leaders of the Democratic Party, who had helped to get Roosevelt elected. Now it was up to Roosevelt to help them.

Within the first hundred days of his presidential term, Roosevelt rushed enough bills through the Democratic Congress to take care of his loyal followers. He put through the NRA (National Recovery Administration) Bill, which provided many jobs for the district and precinct Democratic leaders; the CCC (Civilian Conservation Commission) for the support of unskilled workers, and the PWA (Public Works Administration) for that of skilled workers. With these he could give jobs to all who asked for one, provided, of course, they were members of the Democratic Party and were found to be loyal supporters of the President himself. In addition, by means of expedient loans from the RFC (Reconstruction Finance Corporation), he obtained pledges from important industrial leaders throughout the country.

All this required billions of dollars. But those who received this money—the entire enlarged Democratic Party—spoke up for Roosevelt and defended his spending. They grew so fast in numbers that they overwhelmed the voices of those who objected.

THE FEDERAL BUREAUCRACY

Under the American Constitution, the forty-eight states are supposed to be practically supreme in their own territories, and the Federal Government is supposed to handle only certain limited national affairs. But a comparison of State Government employees with the number of Federal Government employees operating within any one of the forty-eight states reveals the fact that there are now far more Federal than State employees.

The Ohio State Government manages to get along with 25,000 employees. But the Federal Government has 90,000 employees in Ohio. In Massachusetts there are 21,000 State employees; Federal employees there total 129,000. In Pennsylvania there are 44,500 State employees and 215,500 Federal employees. The State Government of Wyoming employs 1,100 people; the Federal Government's payroll in Wyoming is 6,200.

With more than 3,000,000 civilian employees—not including the Army and Navy—the Federal Government now has more persons on the taxpayers' payroll than the combined total of all the employees of all the forty-eight states plus all the employees of all the country's county and municipal governments. This cannot be blamed on the war; for 55 per cent of those persons are not directly engaged in the war effort. Since July 1939—more than two years before Pearl Harbor—the Federal Government has increased the number of its new employees almost 50 per cent every six months, despite repeated recommendations to the contrary from Congress. Bureaucracy, rabbitwise, is self-multiplying. The consequences of its fecundity are apparent everywhere. When Thomas Jefferson was President (1801/09), there was one Federal employee for every 5,308 persons. Today there is one Federal employee for every 45 persons—men, women, and children—and this does not include Federal employees in the armed forces.

This bureaucracy is not elected by the people. It is not responsible to the people. It does not answer for its actions at the polls. Yet it spends the people's money, disregards

the will of the people's elected representatives, and is extending its power over the people's lives—down to the last cross-roads, village, and farm.

Thus the Federal bureaucracy in the United States may well be called a class and compared with the Soviet bureaucracy in the USSR. They are similar in size and serve a similar purpose: to perpetuate the rule of Roosevelt and Stalin respectively.

THE MACHINE AT WORK

The first test of Roosevelt's supporters came in 1936, when he ran for re-election. The machine he had built up worked well, thanks to the special oil with which it was greased. In 1940 it was more difficult. The United States had a tradition against third terms. It believed in a second term to honor a worthy public servant but was against a third term, to discourage presidents from using their position to build up a voting machine which would perpetually keep them in office by a series of re-elections. This is exactly what Roosevelt did. By means of favoritism and public spending, he managed to create a special class of Americans who received special benefits and whose duty it was to re-elect Roosevelt for as many terms as he desired.

Once the third-term precedent had been broken, the Democrats as a class began to show signs of arrogance. No longer were they satisfied with their public-works jobs. More money and more favors were demanded of Roosevelt as the price for making him the first third-term president of the United States. Strikes took place among the workers of the PWA throughout the country. Roosevelt faced a crisis. Most of the important public-works projects in the United States had been completed between 1932 and 1940. The general public had begun to criticize Roosevelt's spending, the more so as it had failed to solve the unemployment problem. By 1940, the 1932 total of 13,000,000 unemployed had only been reduced to 10,000,000. The public-works projects had shifted into useless fields. Streets were built which are never to be used, elaborate buildings were erected which were unnecessary, even theatrical performances were financed under the guise of being "public works."

THE WAY OUT

At that time, British propagandists in the United States were securing a certain degree of sympathy from the American public for their war. The country was swamped with propaganda for "Bundles for Britain" and social aid to the destitute and war-stricken population of Britain. This created an atmosphere of war-consciousness in the United States. The psychology of the American people moved from public works to war, and Roosevelt saw a convenient substitute for public-works spending

in war spending.

Very soon after the 1940 election, Roosevelt embarked on a policy toward Germany consisting of "war sanctions," "steps short of war," orders to "shoot at sight" on German submarines, and all the other familiar steps of provocation. Simultaneously, like action was taken against Japan; in November 1941 this crystallized in the refusal to continue negotiations for the adjustment of differences between the United States and Japan. When Japan declared war on December 8, followed by Germany, Roosevelt was able to tell his countrymen that the United States "was being attacked." War now became the official excuse for spending. Instead of spending hundreds of millions on public works, Roosevelt was now in a position to spend hundreds of billions on the war. According to the *New York Daily News* of July 23, 1944, Roosevelt has in his twelve presidential years spent 370 billion dollars, which is more than three times as much as all American Presidents before him spent in 144 years.

Roosevelt was now almost as supreme in the USA as Stalin was in the USSR. His political critics attacked him viciously, and the workers staged numerous strikes against his wage policy; but his bought-and-paid-for supporters upheld his popular prestige.

In addition to the millions of persons directly connected with the Roosevelt machine, there are many millions who have in one way or another benefited by Roosevelt's New Deal. Among them are more than 10,000,000 unemployed of the thirties who recall that it was Roosevelt who paid them their dole and who feel that they owe their present employment in the huge armament industry to Roosevelt's policy. Then there is the large number of traditional Democrats in the South who vote for their Party no matter who the candidate may be ("My grandpa was a Democrat, my pa was a Democrat, and I'm a Democrat too!"). Even when the Democratic fortunes were at their lowest, in 1928, six Southern states voted Democratic. Furthermore, owing to his pro-Jewish policy Roosevelt could count on practically all Jewish votes.

THE VOTES THAT COUNT

Adding up all his safe supporters (and their wives), Roosevelt was able to enter any electoral contest with a block of at least 15 million votes on which he could rely. In 1944, moreover, the Communists were closely allied to Roosevelt and refrained from putting up a candidate of their own, encouraging all their followers and sympathizers to vote for Roosevelt.

To qualify for voting, an American must be (a) over 21; (b) a citizen; (c) not a convict; (d) not deprived of his civil rights; (e) able to read and write; (f) registered. At present

there are in America 81 million people with the qualifications (a) and (b). Subtracting those lacking the qualifications (c) to (e), there still remain some 77 million. After deducting those who for objective reasons (recent change of residence, for example) do not possess qualification (f), there ought to be some 75 million Americans qualified to vote. If we subtract the 15 million safe Roosevelt votes, we find that the real contest in the election was for the remaining 60 million votes. Prior to the elections, American commentators and news agencies predicted a very hot fight, and many expected an unprecedented participation of voters in the elections. But when the votes cast for Roosevelt and Dewey were counted, it was found that they numbered only 45,444,400. Some 30 million people had not exercised their privilege of voting for the highest office in the country.

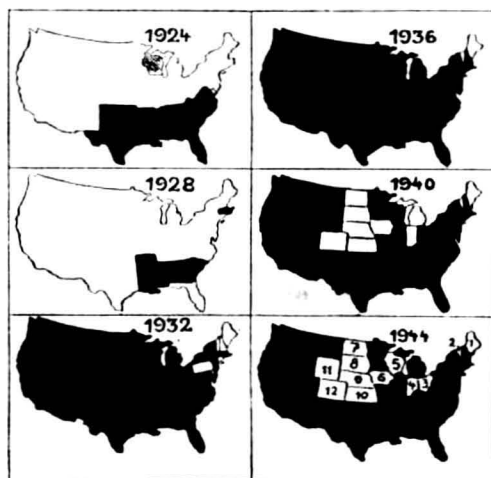
Among these 30 million there were, of course, some who could not go to the polls for reasons such as sickness or old age. There are also some 6 million negro voters in the South who are effectively barred from voting by various devices. But this still leaves a sizeable figure of at least 22 million voters who went on a voting strike on November 7. Why? Some because they did not see much difference between the two candidates; others because they felt that the real bosses of the country stood behind Roosevelt as well as behind Dewey; others again for the simple reason that "they didn't give a damn." America regards herself as the champion of the democratic cause and claims the right to tell other nations what real democracy is. Yet it is a bad sign for American democracy if one third of the electorate does not participate in the elections.

If from the total number of potential voters we subtract Roosevelt's safe votes as well as the 30 million who did not vote, we find that the decision lay with the remaining 30 millions. A very large proportion among them are in uniform (the total number of men in the US armed forces is at present around 11 million). As President, Roosevelt got all the publicity he wanted among the armed forces these last few years. In addition, he is the nation's commander in chief. Although many of the soldiers may have resented going to war after Roosevelt had promised in 1940 not to send them into foreign wars, and although the voting is by secret ballot, it is to be assumed that a certain number of otherwise indifferent soldiers would rather vote for their commander in chief than against him. The fact that Roosevelt had championed a simplified method of soldiers' voting had also no doubt earned him political sympathies in the armed forces. We do not know for sure what the result of the voting among the men in the Army and Navy was. One unofficial report stated that it was 72.6 per cent in favor of Roosevelt.

But as the same report maintained that the civilian vote was 60.7 per cent in favor of Roosevelt—a gross error—we must doubt the accuracy of the first figure. According to the last figures we received (Lisbon, November 10), Roosevelt obtained 24,249,100 votes against Dewey's 21,195,300. Roosevelt's margin of victory being 3,053,800 votes. To appreciate the significance of this margin, one should compare it with that of the first three Roosevelt elections:

<i>Democratic Plurality</i>	
1932	7,060,016
1936	10,797,090
1940	4,846,238
1944	3,053,800

Reduced to per cents, we find that this time Roosevelt got into the White House with 53.36 per cent of the total number of Democratic and Republican votes. (The votes cast for third parties were negligible; the exact figure has not become known here.) The slimmest of Roosevelt's margin of victory represents the true sensation of the elections of 1944.



Republicans and Democrats in the last six presidential elections. States with a Republican majority are shown in white, those with a Democratic majority in black. The shaded area in the first map is Wisconsin, which voted the "Progressive" ticket in 1924. States with a Republican majority in 1944 were: (1) Maine, (2) Vermont, (3) Ohio, (4) Indiana, (5) Wisconsin, (6) Iowa, (7) North Dakota, (8) South Dakota, (9) Nebraska, (10) Kansas, (11) Wyoming, (12) Colorado.

If we recall the advantages with which Roosevelt went into the elections; if we consider that Dewey could in no way compare as a public figure with Roosevelt, being a man of limited popular appeal and with practically no personal following or any program of his own; if we take into account that, in the interest of the prosecution of the war, the Republicans had to refrain from making the important

fields of foreign affairs and military strategy election issues; and if, finally, we realize that many people who opposed Roosevelt were inclined to vote for him merely in order to avoid the confusion which would attend a change in administration at this crucial stage of the war—then we must ask: how is it possible that Roosevelt only obtained so small a margin?

LABOR AND ROOSEVELT

The answer is to be found in the general dissatisfaction with Roosevelt's policy, a dissatisfaction which, as the election results show, goes much deeper than many people imagined. It even pervaded the ranks of Labor, which had in previous elections been responsible for a good deal of Roosevelt's winning margin. This time, many workers have apparently either voted for the Republicans—although these have never been considered a pro-Labor party—or not voted at all. Labor's attitude has also been influenced by Roosevelt's handling of the trade-union problem in recent years.

In 1932, Roosevelt appealed directly to the American Federation of Labor and obtained its support by promising pro-Labor legislation. But Roosevelt could not afford to let Labor grow too strong because of the big-business interests behind the Democratic Party. In 1936 he decided to weaken Labor by splitting it into two factions. For this purpose he sponsored John L. Lewis, the dissenting leader who was the personal rival of William Green, the President of the AF of L. Roosevelt did this by passing the Wagner Act, which provided for "collective bargaining" by employees' representatives with the employer corporations, thus legalizing the organization of new unions in fields which were not covered by AF of L unions. Lewis was now able to organize the Congress of Industrial Organizations, and in the 1936 elections both the AF of L and CIO fully supported Roosevelt. It was the year of Roosevelt's greatest margin of victory.

After the election, however, Roosevelt dropped his support of the CIO. He had now brought sufficient disunity into the ranks of organized Labor to prevent all possibility of Labor uniting and sponsoring its own candidate for the presidency. As Labor could not expect anything from the Republicans, both factions had to bid against each other for Roosevelt's favors. By playing the sphinx and being noncommittal, Roosevelt managed to obtain the official support both of the AF of L and CIO in the elections of 1940 and 1944. Nevertheless, individual members of these Labor unions did not consider themselves bound by the commitments made by their leaders. Many listened to John L. Lewis, who had been replaced by Philip Murray in the presidency of the CIO and had become a bitter opponent of Roosevelt.

MORE REASONS FOR DISSATISFACTION

Among other sections of America's population there was also much dissatisfaction with Roosevelt. Of course, election speeches should not be taken too seriously. Still the criticism voiced in these speeches against Roosevelt gives certain indications of the sources of unrest. It is interesting to note that the fourth term as such was only a minor issue when compared with the opposition directed against the third term during the 1940 campaign. Apparently the Americans felt that, once the no-third-term principle had been violated, there was no sense in establishing a no-fourth-term principle.

The points at issue most frequently mentioned in the anti-Roosevelt campaign speeches were the incompetence of the Roosevelt bureaucracy so glaringly demonstrated in the course of the country's mobilization; distrust in many of the men whom Roosevelt had put into the country's key positions; the apprehension that the growing centralization of power in the hands of a bureaucracy not directly responsible to the nation represented a mortal danger to democracy; anger over the false information given by Roosevelt on the course, losses, and duration of the war; the absence of reliable postwar economic plans; the fear that Roosevelt—who, in spite of a spending program of 58 billion dollars in his first two terms had under peace-time conditions not been able to reduce the number of unemployed below 10 millions—would not solve the employment problem after the war either; and the feeling that Roosevelt was responsible for many serious war-time strikes.

With all these and many other reasons for dissatisfaction with Roosevelt, the American voters found themselves in a quandary on November 7. What were those opposed to Roosevelt to do? They could vote for Dewey; but he was a man who, on all important issues, either said "Yes—but" to Roosevelt's plans or advocated the return to economic and social conditions which most people realized could not be restored. Or they could refrain from voting. Many of the votes cast for Dewey were not so much for Dewey as against Roosevelt. Take the Polish-Americans who voted the Republican ticket. They knew that Poland had been sold out to Stalin, no matter who would be the next President. Yet by voting for Dewey they could at least express their disappointment in Roosevelt for breaking his "Atlantic Charter" promises.

The 1944 presidential elections have given Roosevelt his fourth term. But his domestic and international prestige has suffered by the precarious margin of his victory. The man who, in one of the crucial moments of America's history and holding more aces in his hand than any previous president, received the support of only 53 per cent of the total votes cast, can hardly claim to possess the nation's full confidence.